

## THE IMPLICATIONS AND LEGACIES OF CHIAPAS' 1925 WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE DECREE

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### RESUMEN

En 1925, Chiapas otorgó el derecho a voto a las mujeres del estado, así como los derechos de ciudadanas, declarándolas jurídicamente iguales a los hombres; esto se dio veintiocho años antes que cuando la federación lo dispuso para el ámbito nacional. Dicho importante antecedente ha sido omitido en la historiografía mexicana por completo, aun siendo el primer decreto de este tipo en el país y a pesar de haber sido invocado como ejemplo exitoso en las subsecuentes discusiones acerca del derecho general del sufragio femenino. También la historiografía estatal hace caso omiso. El siguiente texto pretende corregir este silencio historiográfico y se enfoca en la importancia que tiene el decreto para nuestra manera de ver e interpretar la época posrevolucionaria en el estado.

In may of 1925, licenciado César Córdoba, provisional governor of the state of Chiapas, issued a decree that granted chiapaneca women the right to vote and full equality before the law. This was just a few days before Córdoba's provisional governorship ended and his ally Carlos Vidal took office. Indeed, the suffrage decree was so late in his term that it was issued after Córdoba's final gubernatorial *Informe* to the chiapaneco legislature, in which he outlined his accomplishments as governor in the five short months he spent in office. Thus, the act that Córdoba is most remembered for historically does not even appear in his own public accounting of his gubernatorial achievements.<sup>1</sup> With Decree #34, Córdoba

made Chiapas the first state in Mexico to grant women full rights of citizenship and the fourth state to grant women the right to vote, twenty-eight years before full female suffrage was declared nationally in Mexico.<sup>2</sup> While this important precedent in Mexican politics has been largely overlooked by historians, it was not forgotten by suffrage proponents in Mexico in the years that followed. During the congressional debates, over proposed federal suffrage decrees in subsequent decades, Chiapas' suffrage precedent was invoked as an example of the successful inclusion of women into Mexican political life, within the debate in the Cámara de Diputados, in the press, and by prominent suffragists.<sup>3</sup>

While there is little documentary evidence that this decree dramatically changed the lives of women in Chiapas in the 1920s or beyond or that it radically changed the course of chiapaneco politics. The 1925 enfranchisement of women nevertheless raises a number of significant historical and historiographical questions, which this article seeks to address. That scholars well-versed in Mexican history are often surprised to learn Chiapas was one of the first states in Mexico to grant women political rights is in a sense testimony to its very significance. Setting out to answer the seemingly simple questions about this decree of “why Chiapas?” and “why in 1925?” opens the door to a far more complicated and broader range of issues and debates and therefore makes it deserving far greater historical attention and credence than it has up to this point received.

Chiapas' decree of women's suffrage was notably different to the federal suffrage amendments that would be passed in Mexico in later years, in several important respects. First, it was precisely a decree, clarifying that the state constitution's pre-existing definition

of citizenship should be understood to apply to women, as well as to men, whereas all federal women's suffrage measures were carried out by constitutional amendment, enabling women to have their first vote in municipal elections in 1947 and then in national elections, with the granting of full citizenship to women, in 1953.<sup>4</sup> Second, and more significantly, Chiapas' enfranchisement of women occurred at a moment of tremendous political upheaval and uncertainty in the state, in sharp contrast to the federal suffrage measures, which were characterized by their cautious timing and long debated concerns on the part of legislators over their potential destabilizing effects on national politics and Mexican family life. The fact that suffrage in Chiapas meanwhile came about in a period of political strife in the state is a significant consideration here, for it was in many ways precisely this moment of instability that both inspired and enabled César Córdoba (assumed here to have been acting on behalf of his ally, incoming governor General Carlos Vidal), to declare women to be full citizens of Chiapas as his last act in gubernatorial office in 1925.

The fact that the interim governorship of César Córdoba was necessary at all is itself testimony to the volatility of this particular moment in Chiapas' political history. General Carlos Vidal's election as governor of Chiapas in the autumn of 1924 was so contested by his political adversaries in the state that the federal government of Alvaro Obregón finally saw fit to revoke the state government's autonomy and mandate the interim governorship ultimately assumed by Córdoba, until Vidal was able to finally assume the office in May of the following year. The story of how Vidal eventually came to power in the Chiapas is intimately tied to the story of women's suffrage in the state and that he took office merely a few days after the enfranchisement of chiapaneca women is by no means a coincidence.

Carlos Vidal was a small-time planter from Pichucalco, who first made himself known as a political force, with which to be reckoned in Chiapas in his hometown, when he advocated the annexation of Pichucalco to Tabasco in 1911 (Benjamin 1996: 103). Vidal quickly became involved in national and regional politics and military movements in the wake of the political chaos that descended on the state in the aftermath of Madero's assassination. Vidal and his brother Luis were indeed among the first Chiapanecos to come out against the regime of Victoriano Huerta and for the Constitutionalists. In 1915, Vidal fought in Veracruz with at least five hundred men under his command (Spenser 1988: 80-81). Indeed, Vidalismo was something of a family affair, as Vidal stayed in close communication with many of his siblings in regards to state and local politics throughout his career. Vidal continued to rise in the Constitutionalist ranks in the Southeast, serving first under General José Agustín Castro when he came to Chiapas as First Chief Venustiano Carranza's proconsul, and then himself as a *Carrancista* proconsul, first as governor and military commander in Quintana Roo in 1917 and then as provisional governor of Tabasco from 1918 to 1919 (Gordillo y Ortiz 1999: 73). He soon after returned to fight at Chiapas under General Salvador Alvarado who was to then go on to take over the proconsulship of General Castro in 1918.

Vidal ran for governor of Chiapas for the first time in 1920, initially as a *Carrancista* and Constitutionalist and lost to the leader of the anti-Constitutionalist pro-state sovereignty *Mapache* movement in the state, Tiburcio Fernández Ruiz.<sup>5</sup> It was the Agua Prieta rebellion against Venustiano Carranza that effectively brought Vidal's gubernatorial aspirations in 1920 to an end, as national political considerations came to take precedence over local

rivalries. Vidal met with Fernández Ruiz in February of 1920 and signed a pact in which he recognized Fernández Ruiz as the leader of the revolutionary movement in Chiapas in exchange for Fernández Ruiz's support of Obregón and Agua Prieta.<sup>6</sup> With this newfound, national backing, Fernández Ruiz was subsequently able to further consolidate his power within the state and became governor in 1920. The extremely complex series of political and military alliances and compromises that played a role in the assumption of the governorship by Fernández Ruiz were not long-lived. Carlos Vidal would engage in a bitter fight against a Fernández Ruiz-endorsed *Mapache* candidate four years later in his second bid for the governorship, in 1924. In that campaign, shifts in Vidal's political alignments would prove to be decisive to his success in attaining the governorship where he had failed four years earlier; decisive in terms of both his ability and his desire to give chiapaneca women the right to vote.

While declaring women to be full citizens of the state can in some senses be regarded as having been groundbreaking and politically radical, as well as risky, the manner in which it was decreed and implemented in Chiapas was at the same time strikingly cautious. César Córdoba almost certainly issued the decree in his capacity as a proxy and gubernatorial placeholder for Carlos Vidal, perhaps in order to deflect any potential backlash against the measure away from Vidal (although there is no evidence that such a backlash occurred). Córdoba notably seems to have been especially preoccupied with electoral matters more generally in his five months in office. In his final *Informe* to the Chiapaneco legislature at the end of his term (a week before the decree of suffrage), of seven decrees that Córdoba highlights among his gubernatorial achievements, five concern elections and two make

changes to the state's Electoral Law.<sup>7</sup> Clearly, Córdoba's term in office was a time of persistent change in conceptions of electoral rights and administration of elections in Chiapas, which is entirely unsurprising, considering the circumstances by which he became Provisional Governor in the first place (i.e., an inconclusive and hotly-contested gubernatorial election). In this light, the decree of women's political and electoral rights at the end of his brief gubernatorial term can be seen to have served as the final achievement within a more general project of electoral reform and renegotiation. Moreover, in light of the caution that Córdoba evidently exercised in regards to all matters electoral, his decree allowing women to vote cannot be considered to have been a haphazard last act, or an unpremeditated political whim.<sup>8</sup>

The decree on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1925, read:

Considering: that the woman, as an integral part of society and a principal factor in the home and in the family, affected by all matters in which men are involved, as mother, wife, daughter or sister of men, and as such, is profoundly interested in social problems;

Considering: that the infamous idea that existed in ancient times and savage societies, that a woman is a being similar to a piece of furniture in her sad subordination to a man, who treated her with horrible despotism without conceding her any rights, has disappeared;

Considering: that in the modern life of all refined countries on Earth, the woman constitutes a technical, intellectual, and moral factor of unquestionable merit, and as such, we witness her excelling with extraordinary ability and supreme majesty in the fields of science, art, and politics, due to her moral vigor, and the incomparable strength of her feminine charms;

Considering: that great physiologists and psychologists who have dedicated themselves to the study of the woman have found in her the rare virtue of being superior to men in her moral resistance and in many cases even in the physical body, and above all, with a great ability to solve difficult social, political, and scientific problems;

Considering: that when the issue of giving the woman the right to participate in politics has arisen in different communities in the nation, the opposition has presented the argument that women are not prepared for these large questions, without comprehending that this lack of preparation is due precisely to the fact that no one has ever given her the opportunity to initiate activity in this important area of life;

Considering: that with the virtue that the woman possesses of beautifying and ennobling everything; this rare ability which in many cases has to do with important questions; and that with her characteristic direct penetration in political matters, the sad and troubled manner in which these questions are dealt with today will disappear with only her intervention, and out of respect and all of the courtesy and consideration that all men should have for her, and she will effect the end of all riots, tumults, and violent acts in electoral struggles, and even in armed movements.

Decreed: In all the territory of Chiapas, women eighteen years and older are recognized to have the same political rights as men; as such, they have the right to vote and to run for public offices, whichever those may be.<sup>9</sup>

This decree was certainly radical for its time, particularly within the national context. However, if the explicit political and electoral enfranchisement of women was new in Mexico in 1925, some of the concepts used in the justifications of the decree were by no

means new or revolutionary. Indeed, if the application of these concepts was cutting-edge for its time, the foundational principles in the decree's *consideraciones* were anything but.

Even as Chiapas lawmakers who supported the decree and maintained it within state law theoretically, did so as a demonstration and declaration of the legal and political equality of men and women, this decree of gender equality was fundamentally based on the presumption of inherent gender difference. Women, the decree states, “are recognized to have the same political rights as men.” The reasoning behind this recognition was nevertheless predicated on characteristics of an essentialized vision of the chiapaneca woman: her vigor is in her morality, her strength is in her feminine charms and her inherent nobility and grace will serve to soothe and beautify the chaos and ugliness of the political sphere. Significantly, the first consideration of the decree is that this essentialized woman is engaged and participates in the public and political spheres specifically in terms of her relationships with the men in her life: she is a wife and a mother, and a sister, and a daughter to men, who are naturally and independently political participants and public citizens. In short, the decree argues that women ought to be enfranchised not because of a natural right to political citizenship, but because of a natural femininity that had the potential to improve the morally corrupt and violent world of fundamentally male politics.

This was not the first or the last time that justifications such as these would be used to argue for the enfranchisement of Mexican women. General Salvador Alvarado similarly rationalized that women would serve as a moralizing force in the political sphere, just as they did in the domestic sphere, in his capacity as Constitutionalist proconsul of Yucatán,

where he organized the First Feminist Congress of Yucatán in 1916. (Alvarado also saw the potential benefits of bringing a new segment of the population into the political sphere as his own, grateful constituents.)<sup>10</sup> In 1947, when women were given the right to vote at the municipal level in Mexico under President Miguel Alemán, many of the same rationalizations were given for the inclusion of women in Mexican political life, including a *consideración* similarly describing the “moralizing” ability of Mexican women, which could potentially benefit the political arena.<sup>11</sup> In 1953, President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines would also make an argument that women’s political rights should be founded on their categorical morality and “abnegation” (Buck 2002: 571-572). In short, the only successful efforts to legally establish women’s equality in Mexico either explicitly or implicitly assumed their inherent difference.

In his 1963 seminal study of women’s suffrage in Mexico, Ward M. Morton cites Ruiz Cortines as defending the 1953 federal decree of suffrage issued during his presidential term by referring to the “favorable” result of the 1947 amendment that granted Mexican women the right to vote in municipal elections (Morton 1962: 65-66). The implication by Ruiz Cortines that the 1947 amendment served as a testing-ground of sorts for the right of women to participate in electoral politics strongly suggests that politicians involved in the federal suffrage debate actively sought out relevant precedents for the 1953 decree of federal suffrage. Chiapas’ suffrage decree and its language was just such a precedent for both federal amendments. But what then was the provenance of this ironically backward-looking strategy for bringing about the advancement of women to the political stage in

Chiapas? The answer lies in the network of alliances at the national, regional and local levels that Carlos Vidal built in his second quest for the governorship of the state.

Shortly before Vidal was defeated by Tiburcio Fernández Ruiz in his first bid for the governorship of Chiapas in 1920, Vidal's friend and ally Ricardo Alfonso Paniagua helped to found the Chiapas Socialist Party (PSCh), with which Vidal subsequently became allied and closely associated (Benjamin 1996: 152-153).<sup>12</sup> Paniagua was a young political organizer from Bella Vista who would spend the majority of his life and make a name for himself fighting for social justice in Chiapas (Gordillo y Ortiz 1999: 59, Zebadúa 1999: 153). The PSCh was formed in Motozintla, in the far south of Chiapas in January of 1920, in part as a reaction to the political suppression that Vidal's supporters had faced in the region (Benjamin 1996: 142-3, Spenser 1988: 84-85, Zebadúa 1999: 153). Paniagua and the PSCh successfully channeled unrest and dissatisfaction among the workers on the coffee plantations of Soconusco and Mariscal, where there had been increasing tension between workers and landowners since General Castro's imposition of the Law of Workers, which had led some of the workers in the coffee region to join the Constitutionalist army (Spenser 1988: 82). While there was a great deal of overlap in terms of both politics and constituency between Vidalismo and Chiapaneco Socialism such as they were from the outset, Vidal's formal alliance with Paniagua and the PSCh was nevertheless decisive for him in his second campaign for the governorship in 1924, for it lent him the grassroots support base his first gubernatorial bid had lacked.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, it was a well-organized base of support that Vidal gained from his new political coalition, made up in large part of

the unionized coffee workers in the south that the Socialists had been working to mobilize politically (Zebadúa 1999: 154).

It was likely the Socialist movement in the state and his ties to it that most greatly inspired Vidal's suffragism, as women's "equality" was central to the political platform of the PSCh. The Party's constitution, drafted on January 13, 1920, was explicit on this point, describing women's rights as chief among "the goals which socialism pursues":

As far as equal rights for both sexes, as demonstrated in the feminist struggle in England and the United States and other nations which represent the vanguard of civilization, where women have attained the right to vote and evoking the glorious historical figures of Joan of Arc, María Josefa Ortíz de Domínguez and Leona Vicario... (Spenser 1988: 181-2).

As evidenced here, like many Mexican feminists and supporters of women's rights in Mexico in this period, the chiapaneco Socialists understood feminism in terms of the precedents set by other nations, the United States and England, in particular. Feminism and suffrage were constructed here as not only a means to attain a more just social order but to attain modernity and to join the "vanguard of civilization." But the Socialists also contextualized their goal of attaining equality between the sexes in their party's constitution within a series of goals for social justice more broadly: the end of worker exploitation, the attainment of class equality, and communism as the "superlative" of socialism and the means of bringing about "the reign of justice in the world" (Ibid.).

When Carlos Vidal finally won Chiapas' governorship in 1925, he owed his victory in large part to the support of the PSCh, and to Paniagua. The sweeping goals of the Chiapaneco Socialists, as defined in their Party constitution, were well beyond the legislative means of even the most devoted and powerful Socialist governor. Vidal's grasp on power in the state was established but likely still tenuous, after months of struggle to even take office after his election and facing ongoing complaints and accusations being made against him by his Mapache opponents (as well as other political enemies, both inside and outside of the state), which endured for the duration of his governorship. Vidal could and did take steps towards enacting the Socialists' agenda but women's suffrage was perhaps his best chance at making a highly explicit and visible nod to his Socialist backers and constituency. If Vidal could not single-handedly and in a single gubernatorial term end the exploitation of workers and class stratification in Chiapas it was, nevertheless, certainly (and demonstrably) within his power to legally enfranchise women.

Therefore, decreed as César Córdoba finished his brief, interim governorship, and just days before Vidal assumed the governorship of the state after a hotly contested election and protracted struggle for power, the Chiapas suffrage decree must be read as a statement of purpose, of sorts, by Vidal and his allies. Much as it would be regarded later during the debates over women's suffrage at the federal level in Mexico, the political enfranchisement of women in Chiapas in 1925 was understood as a calculated political risk. For Vidal, however, women's suffrage also represented a political opportunity, as a means of making clear his political alignment(s). This was, after all, a period in Mexican politics in which alliances were of supreme importance and could make or break political careers, literally

becoming a matter of life or death as the purges in aftermath of the De La Huerta rebellion of 1923 demonstrated. Indeed, accusations of sympathy for Adolfo De La Huerta would follow Carlos Vidal for the rest of his political career; he could not have afforded a serious policymaking misstep in his first days in office that might serve to alienate either his constituency in Chiapas, or his powerful political patrons in Mexico City.<sup>14</sup> The political pros and cons that women's suffrage represented in Chiapas in 1925 must therefore be considered in light of the larger context of this uneasy moment in Mexican politics.

Like several of the other southeastern socialist governors, such as Felipe Carrillo Puerto of Yucatán, and Tomás Garrido Canabal of Tabasco, Carlos Vidal remained loyal to Álvaro Obregón in the years that followed his lost gubernatorial bid of 1920, while simultaneously working diligently to build his relationship and alliance with Obregón's Secretary of Government, Plutarco Elías Calles. The issue of patronage from Mexico City was absolutely essential, as had indubitably been demonstrated to Vidal by his loss to Fernández Ruiz in the previous election cycle, in which Obregón's favor had been so decisive. This emphasis on allegiance to national political patrons within local political campaigns is highly conspicuous in the coverage of Vidal's two successive gubernatorial bids in the state press and the marked changes in *Vidalista* rhetoric between the campaigns of 1920 and 1924.

Vidal's 1920 campaign manager Jesús Martínez Rojas (Benjamin 1996: 138) also served as the publisher of the San Cristóbal-based newspaper *El Tribuno*, which regularly proclaimed its support of Vidal's gubernatorial candidacy two years in advance of the 1920 election, in

front-page banner headlines before Vidal had even returned to the state. The repeated endorsement read: “General Carlos A. Vidal is the only candidate for the Constitutional government of the state, for he is the Chiapaneco most affiliated with the cause of Carranza and he is the one who has fought the hardest in Chiapas to impose the new order of things, both with his pen and with his sword.”<sup>15</sup> For Vidal’s supporters, in 1920, it is clear that beyond his alliances and political and military experience within the state it was his national political allegiances and alliances that were very much in his favor as their candidate. If Tiburcio Fernández Ruiz and the Mapaches saw constitutionalism as a continuing threat to the sovereignty of their *Patria Chica*, their opponents saw the election of Vidal as their governor as the way to bring Constitutional order to Chiapas to stay.

That Vidal’s affiliations and alliances had changed by 1924 is clearly reflected in the marked difference in how he was described during his second gubernatorial bid. Whereas he had campaigned in 1920 as the ambassador of constitutionalism to the state, four years later, Vidal was described by his supporters in the media as the embodiment of the promises of Socialism in Chiapas. There is a clear periodical record of Socialist and general opposition support of Vidal, both during his candidacy and during his governorship. Chiapas’ Socialist and workers’ newspapers across the state were vocal in their support of Vidal’s second gubernatorial bid. In March of 1925, the Tuxtla workers’ paper *Patria Libre* enthusiastically endorsed Vidal in his second bid for the governorship, describing him as “the triumphant candidate that because of his prestige and his ability is called to bring about the innovations of progress that the community of Chiapas demands.”<sup>16</sup> Below the endorsement, a headline read, “No More Mapaches.” Following a scathing series of

criticisms of Fernández Ruiz and his handpicked successor Ramírez Corzo, the paper proclaimed, “In the candidate Carlos Vidal, the proletariat class will have a true defender of its interests”.

This marked shift in political identification and rhetoric to Socialism by Vidal is indicative, in part, of his relationship to the Chiapas Socialist Party (PSCh) as discussed above but also of his increasingly significant relationship to Secretary of Government and subsequently President, Plutarco Elías Calles. In the Southeast of Mexico in the early 1920s, “socialism” and *Callismo* were intimately linked political movements and in the case of Chiapas became effectively synonymous as Vidal became the face and the leader of both in the state. Indeed, coming into their respective new offices within months of each other, Vidal’s campaign for governor and Calles’ campaign for President in Chiapas were significantly described by their supporters as part of a larger, singular, political project. Vidalista campaign rallies in 1924 prominently featured banners with the portraits of both Vidal and Calles.

When Calles became President, in 1924, he had already been working for several years to build his political base of support across Mexico. Even as he served as Álvaro Obregón’s Secretary of Government and even before his succession to the presidency can be regarded to have been certain, Calles was clearly laying the political groundwork for his own consolidation of influence, control and power. While *Obregonismo* and *Callismo* were not precisely opposing political orientations in the early 1920s, lines were being drawn and

loyalties were being declared to Calles while Obregón was scarcely halfway through his four-year presidency.<sup>17</sup>

Calles' relationship to Vidal went far further back than many scholars have acknowledged, indeed, they were in familiar communication with one another as early as 1920. Correspondence between Calles and Raymundo Enríquez, the federal congressional deputy from Chiapas, shows that as early as 1922, Enríquez was working with the nascent Chiapaneco Socialist movement to secure Vidal's gubernatorial candidacy and significantly, at the same time, to secure Calles' Presidential aspirations.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Enríquez at one point wrote to Calles telling him not to waste his presidential campaign resources in the state, as all of the *callista* propaganda efforts in Chiapas were being taken care of by the Chiapaneco Socialists and their allies.<sup>19</sup> As the same letter from Enríquez from 1923 demonstrates, part of this project was also to unify (or at least to project an image of unification) the various Socialist factions of Chiapas and to encourage them to associate themselves with Yucatán's Governor Felipe Carrillo Puerto's Socialist Party of the Southeast (PSS). For Calles, therefore, securing both the power and influence of the Chiapaneco Socialists as well as the governorship of Vidal in Chiapas were parts of his plan to secure his own place at the top of the Mexican political hierarchy of the 1920s. The relationship between Vidal and Calles was clearly a long-standing and mutually beneficial one and Calles' support of Vidal's governorship in 1924 must be understood in this light and as in no way a haphazard selection of a merely acceptable proxy in the state. Similarly, as one of the very first *vidalista* gubernatorial initiatives, the 1925 women's suffrage decree

must be interpreted in the context of Vidal's brand of Chiapaneco *Callismo* and in terms of his relationship to Calles.

It is clear that President Calles was fully aware of the Chiapas women's suffrage decree at the time of its declaration by Córdoba. He was apprised of the decree at least three separate times by various leaders in Tuxtla Gutiérrez in May of 1925: first by César Córdoba himself, by telegram on May 11, 1925 (to which Calles responded personally in acknowledgement the following day), by the Chiapaneco Congress, also by telegram, on May 12<sup>th</sup> and in an official letter from Ricardo Alfonso Paniagua, in his new capacity as the President of the state's congressional deputies, dated May 12<sup>th</sup>.<sup>20</sup> While Calles' opinion of the decree at the time is unknown, what we do know is that he chose *not* to do certainly speaks to his reaction to it. Calles did nothing to interfere with the declaration of the extension of the franchise to women by Córdoba (and by extension Vidal), or with its passage and ratification by the Chiapaneco legislature. In the context of the federal-state relationship at that particular moment, in which Governor Córdoba had effectively been appointed to the governorship by the President as part of a federal revocation of the state government's political autonomy, Calles certainly would have been able to put a stop to the enfranchisement of women in Chiapas, had he seen fit to do so.

These are important considerations, not only in terms of how suffrage played out in Chiapas, but also because Chiapas' women's suffrage decree and Calles' reaction (or lack thereof) to it serves to significantly complicate the extant historiographical portrayals of Calles' attitudes toward women and their potential politicization. Most scholars who have

written about women's suffrage in Mexico maintain that Calles was explicitly and fervently opposed to the political enfranchisement of women because of what he believed to be Mexican women's fanatical religious tendencies. The idea that women were religious fanatics was in part cemented within Mexican political culture in the 1920s by the frequent and visible participation of women in the Cristero War of 1926-1930. Ana Macías, for one, argues that the feeling was mutual and that many religious Mexican women felt alienated by Calles' staunch anticlericalism. Moreover, Macías maintains, at a time when Calles was struggling to consolidate power nationally, leading up to the formation of the National Revolutionary Party (PNR) in 1929, Calles believed that women could not be counted on as a reliable voting bloc (A. Macías 1982: 138). However, this explanation fails to account for Calles' tacit support for the southeastern women's suffrage measures of the 1920s, in Yucatán, Tabasco, and Chiapas (as well as San Luis Potosí), none of which he made any documented attempt to thwart, discourage, or overrule.<sup>21</sup> The standard portrayal of Calles' stance on the politicization of Mexican women is therefore incomplete, particularly concerning the years previous to the Cristiada. While Calles was by no one's estimation a devoted suffragist at any point, his evident willingness to see women in Chiapas and in the southeast more generally gain the right to vote necessarily adds a new dimension to our understandings of his position on women's suffrage, at least in this early period.

Setting aside for the moment the obvious questions of whether or not Carlos Vidal and his allies genuinely believed in the right of women to vote, or whether Vidal was able to enforce the suffrage decree to any notable extent, in 1925 in Chiapas, women's suffrage had become a political expediency on several levels. Following the model of his former

revolutionary mentor Salvador Alvarado and his calculated and opportunist program of politicizing the women of Yucatán and at the same time demonstrating his good Socialist faith to his grassroots Socialist-organized support base in Chiapas and furthermore affirming his Socialist (and thereby *Callista*) credentials at the regional level, a decree of women's suffrage must have made sound political sense to Carlos Vidal and his gubernatorial proxy Córdoba. Whether or not women exercised their newfound rights however, was most likely a much lesser consideration for Vidal.

Nevertheless, there were women in Chiapas who certainly took note of the decree and took advantage of their sudden political enfranchisement in the state. While it is clear that in Chiapas, like the rest of Mexico, the demand for female electoral enfranchisement was heavily dominated by middle and upper class non-indigenous women, it would be a gross oversimplification to assume that this meant that there was no meaningful participation of women in the political sphere in Chiapas, either before or after the 1925 suffrage decree. This is not to say that with a single decree Chiapas lawmakers succeeded in bringing the majority or even a significant portion of the female citizens of the state into the political fold. Indeed, the ongoing struggles in Chiapas today to enfranchise women speak to this shortcoming of the 1925 suffrage effort. While the real and meaningful enfranchisement and politicization of Chiapaneca women may have been limited in its scope in the 1920s, its significance should nevertheless not be discounted out of hand. A discussion of Chiapas' suffrage decree would be incomplete at best without taking into consideration the real impact that it had and the histories of the women in Chiapas who supported the issuance of the decree and benefited from its ratification.

One of Chiapas' most famous female suffragists was Florinda Lazos León. Born in 1898 in San Cristóbal, she lived a life of political activism and was elected to public office in Chiapas by the age of twenty-four (Gordillo y Ortiz 1999: 52). Lazos belonged to the Anti-reelectionist Center of Mexico and served as a nurse in the Carrancista Liberating Army of the South (Ibid.). She dedicated herself to the struggle for women's rights and in particular worked to organize Campesina women, organizing the first Congress of Women Workers and Peasants in 1919 and was involved in the National Congress of Women Workers and Peasants in 1931 (Ibid.).<sup>22</sup>

Lazos, evidently, very much envisioned her own politics as explicitly in-line with those of Carlos Vidal in the mid-1920s. Moreover, Lazos made her belief in the connection between the actions and interventions of the federal government and Chiapaneco suffrage explicit in an article entitled "Why They Granted Political Rights to Chiapaneca Women" that she wrote for the Tuxtla newspaper *El Palenque* in September of 1925. "Just the same as always," she wrote of the Mapache-led government from 1920-1924, "politics in ignorant hands obstructed my work..."<sup>23</sup> Significantly, Lazos goes beyond her scathing criticisms of *mapachismo* in Chiapas in her extension of her political platform as laid out here to the national level. For Lazos, writing in 1925, the participation of women in politics and the national political upheavals of the same period were inextricably related. She writes,

... the women that wanted to contribute to the social development of the *Patria Chica*, those of us that felt the first bitterness of living with the assassins of Madero and Domínguez, as sincere OBREGONISTAS, maintained disciplined silence and marched to this [state]

capital in search of broad horizons, until the crimes of these men made me raise my voice in protest and obligated me to march in November of 1923 as a propagandist for the candidacy of General Calles, to unmask the false chiapaneco callistas who sought to repeat the masked mockery of 1920, assuring the most loathsome [political] imposition that we have seen in centuries.<sup>24</sup>

There are several important implications made here by Lazos. First, while there may be very little extant hard evidence that there was substantial women's participation in Chiapas politics in the 1920s, Lazos here implies not only that women participated in politics but that they did so well before the 1925 decree of suffrage, organizing to mourn the deaths of Francisco Madero and Belisario Domínguez and to actively support both Obregón and Calles. Second, in her discussion of a specifically female protest against *mapachismo* and those that she saw as perverting true *obregonismo*, Lazos draws a direct connection between women's political participation and the relationship between federal and state-level political upheavals. For Lazos, her political work as a woman was being obstructed by the Mapache government and this led her to form political allegiances with particular national political leaders. The implication is clear: if Lazos believed that the Mapache government sought to thwart her political participation, she also felt that her best hope for her political cause, specifically as a woman, lay in supporting the presidential candidacy of Calles in 1924. Women in Chiapas supported Calles, Lazos tells us, in part to bring about the end of the oppressive and barbaric Mapache regime. Just as Vidal's political fate became tied to Calles, so did one of the leading Chiapaneca feminists of her time see her political course as profoundly related to Calles' candidacy. Lazos' explanation of her

political affinities, as she lays them out here, serves as additional testimony to the likely belief by politicians in Chiapas at the time that President Calles would support (or at least not openly oppose) their suffrage initiative and further that the extension of the franchise to women in the state in no way contravened the tenets of *Callismo*.

Addressing the “why” question of the title of her article, Lazos maintains that Chiapaneca women had rightfully earned their enfranchisement. She writes:

...It was Chiapaneca women, the ignorant ones, the ones that “didn’t know how to judge a candidate” that repudiated the puppet Adolfo de la Huerta, to bring about the triumph of a man like General Calles, who in spite of many, will be the honor of Mexico and the Social Revolution [...].<sup>25</sup>

For Lazos, Chiapaneca women had not only demonstrated their loyal patriotism in the face of the De la Huerta rebellion of 1923 but they had assisted in saving the honor of Mexico and the Revolution itself by allying themselves with Calles. Moreover, she directly confronts an evident allegation that women were unfit to participate politically. In Lazos’ view, Chiapaneca women proved not only their political dedication and capability, but also their “correct” political judgment in choosing to remain loyal to Obregón (and by extension Calles) during the De la Huerta rebellion and by understanding Calles to be the hope of Mexico and its ongoing revolution. The women of Chiapas, Lazos suggests, earned their enfranchisement not only by birthright or by demonstrating their ability and desire to join

in the political fray but perhaps most importantly by specifically demonstrating their support for Obregón and Calles.

Lazos wasted no time in taking advantage of her new legal status as a full citizen of Chiapas. In *La Gleba*, a San Cristóbal workers' party newspaper that she published, she announced her candidacy for Congressional Deputy for the 8<sup>th</sup> district, in July of 1926.<sup>26</sup> She won the seat and between November of 1926 and February of 1927, additionally served as the Prosecretary of the state legislature.<sup>27</sup> In 1952, giving a speech in support of a federal suffrage amendment, Chiapas governor Juan Sabines Gutiérrez stated that at that point there had already been two women who had served as Deputies in the state legislature (Cal y Mayor Redondo 2003: 12-13).<sup>28</sup> In other words, Lazos then was only one of two women elected to the legislature in the intervening twenty-five years.

In subsequent years, after her election to the state legislature, Lazos devoted herself to journalism and to the continued work as editor of *La Gleba* (Gordillo y Ortiz 1999: 52). There are very few surviving copies of *La Gleba*, so it is hard to know for how long it continued to be published. Lazos clearly did not relegate herself to San Cristóbal for long, however. Shirlene Soto describes Lazos, in her capacity as a participant in various national Mexican women's Congresses in the 1930s, as "a lawyer from Chiapas" (Soto 1990: 106-109). In this sense, as she moved into national women's politics, Florinda Lazos literally personified the impact that Chiapas' enfranchisement had in Mexico on the subsequent debate over a federal suffrage amendment.

Like Florinda Lazos, Fidelia Brindis Camacho was an early Chiapaneca feminist who became involved in politics at a very early age and who used journalism to express herself politically. Unlike Lazos, Brindis seems to have concentrated her feminist political activities within Chiapas. However, much like Lazos, Brindis' political allegiances stretched beyond the state's borders. She declared herself a *maderista* while still a teenager, and later supported the *carrancista* cause (Gordillo y Ortiz 1999: 31).

Brindis' best-remembered contribution to Chiapas history, however, was in her capacity as the editor of the feminist periodical *La Altruista*, to which Florinda Lazos León also contributed her efforts as the paper's Secretary. (Brindis in turn was a member of Lazos' *La Gleba* staff.) What is particularly significant about *La Altruista* is that it was published well before the decree of suffrage in 1925 but also before the formation of the Chiapas Socialist Party, indicating that there was feminist organizing in the state entirely independent of *vidalismo* and the PSCh. The fact that Lazos and Brindis were evidently such close collaborators on several projects further serves to enforce that there were women organizing politically in Chiapas well before the extension of the franchise and that the 1925 suffrage decree is highly unlikely to have gone unnoticed or been unutilized.

One of the most telling reactions to the suffrage decree at the time it was issued and ratified comes to us from a woman-run newspaper in Comitán called *Balún Canán*. Edited by one María C. de Serrano, the paper's first edition appeared in the spring of 1925. Comitán lies near the eastern Guatemalan border of Chiapas, and the purpose of the paper, as laid out in its first issue, was to relay "the most recent or important events of the city or the state" and

to serve as “the echo of our social lives” to friends and relatives in both Mexico and Guatemala.<sup>29</sup> Its secondary title header read, “Home. Family. Heritage.”<sup>30</sup> While the paper was not specifically feminist in its outlook, its protagonists and its intended audience were clearly women.

*Balún Canán* consistently praised the work and demeanor of Governor Córdoba. In its 4<sup>th</sup> issue its editors wrote of Córdoba’s honorable reaction to evident personal attacks he had sustained in the Chiapaneco press, quoting the Governor as stating that he understood that the purpose of the press was not to “hurt reputations, but to educate the masses.”<sup>31</sup> “This is the first time we have seen this,” the paper declared, “because it has been the custom of Chiapaneco politicians to combat insults with insults.”<sup>32</sup> A few weeks later, the paper praised Córdoba for mandating a minimum agrarian investment of 30% of the capital of foreign landholders in the state. “This accord could not be more timely, on the mark, or patriotic,” the *Balún Canán* writers opined.<sup>33</sup>

The high opinion the women who ran the paper held of Córdoba previous to his issuance of the suffrage decree brings into particularly sharp focus the reaction they registered to the decree:

Governor Córdoba didn’t want to abandon us without granting the feminine sex a gallantry: to concede to us the same civil rights that until now only men enjoyed. We women thank him for this action, as bizarre and noble as it was chivalrous. [...] Sincerely believe that the majority of we Chiapaneca women understand that this act is inspired by the soundest

intention and the purest good faith—in a word, in the greatest good will, and not, as some others believe, in a spirit of vanity or exhibitionism. It is enough that we desire the good of considering ourselves distanced from that perversity.<sup>34</sup>

For the Comiteca women writing here, the reaction was one of surprised appreciation. Several things are made evident. First, while not a feminist newspaper, the women who worked to produce *Balún Canán* were clearly interested and invested in issues affecting the women of Chiapas and yet clearly did not expect their political enfranchisement as Córdoba's last act in office. This suggests that even if there was feminist political organizing occurring in the state leading up to the decree, as most-probably spearheaded by women like Florinda Lazos and Fidelia Brindis, that women's groups were not directly involved in or even apprised in advance of the issuance and subsequent ratification of suffrage. While this in no way lessens the importance of the women's organizing that may have occurred surrounding the extension of the franchise, it does serve to enforce notion that the timing, if not the substance, of the decree was ultimately the prerogative of Córdoba and Vidal.<sup>35</sup>

The article continues:

It's a terrible shame that this political gift should be so inconsistent and fragile, so insubstantial, that we still can't take advantage of it even though without a doubt Governor Córdoba wished us to; this well-known gift has the suggestive transparency of a soap bubble, with the positive disadvantage that the lightest breeze destroys it. [...] Well now, if only we had the culture of North America or Europe, but in this respect, although it saddens

us to confess it, we are still in diapers, and from here we still need many years for this noble proposition of Governor Córdoba to become a beautiful reality.<sup>36</sup>

Contrary to the belief in the decree that Florinda Lazos held in the power and veracity of chiapaneco suffrage, which propelled her to successfully run for public office only a year later, the women of *Balún Canán* reluctantly doubted the decree's potential efficacy. Echoing the sentiments of many throughout the debates over Mexican federal suffrage, they saw chiapaneca society as unprepared to put the decree into meaningful effect. Lazos was certainly unusual in the scope of her political achievements and that she was such an exceptional figure suggests that many women in Chiapas probably reacted to their newfound enfranchisement with an attitude more similar to that of the extremely skeptical gratitude of the comiteca journalists.

Lazos' exceptionalism is further supported by subsequent periodical coverage in Chiapas of the federal debates over a national women's suffrage amendment. Several articles in Chiapas newspapers, which discussed the 1947 national municipal-level suffrage amendment and the 1952 full federal suffrage amendment, mentioned that women had first been fully enfranchised in Chiapas. The ways the Chiapas precedent was described in retrospect by journalists in the state varied widely, ranging from pride to outright dismissal. Indeed, the daily Tuxtla paper *El Herald* expressed both of these views in response to the 1952 federal suffrage amendment. On December 13, 1952, Ramiro de Aguilar wrote tellingly:

In Chiapas this is not a new thing, since for many years now the rights of women have been legally recognized and a few women have succeeded in occupying the posts of local Deputies and Municipal Presidents, although ultimately it is something that has declined and no woman in actuality [now] occupies a position of public representation.<sup>37</sup>

Two weeks later he adopted a prouder outlook on chiapaneca suffrage, writing that “the women’s vote is not a new thing in Chiapas, since it was conceded long ago [here], which indicates the progressiveness that we [chiapanecos] achieved in this area.”<sup>38</sup>

De Aguilar’s description of suffrage in Chiapas as a phenomenon that had fallen by the political wayside by the 1950s is probably an accurate one. While the state government never purged the suffrage decree from the books, women’s suffrage seems to have been a particular political moment in the state which had for the most part passed by the time the rest of Mexico caught up to it. Women like Florinda Lazos succeeded in exercising their full political rights as granted by the decree but did so at the time it was issued, which was a moment of relative political radicalism in the state. If women’s suffrage endured on paper in Chiapas, it was apparently not as durable a reform in practice.

The Chiapas suffrage decree outlived its chief protagonist, however. In 1927, when Álvaro Obregón announced his intentions to run for presidential reelection, Governor Vidal refused to support his bid, citing the tenet of the Mexican Revolution, “*sufragio efectivo y no reelección*.” Under Vidal’s command, the federal legislators from Chiapas were the only representatives besides those from Veracruz who refused to support the constitutional

amendments necessary for Obregón to run for reelection (Benjamin 1996: 168). When Vidal went yet further and chose to support and manage the campaign of opposition candidate Francisco Serrano in the 1928 presidential elections, not all of his years of support of Obregón, nor the support that both Obregón and Calles had shown him in helping him to take office, would prove to be enough to save either his political career, or his life. Vidal and Serrano were together when they were captured in Morelos and then assassinated in October of 1927, along with twelve others (Benjamin 1996: 169, Gordillo y Ortiz 1999: 73, Zebadúa 1999: 157-158).

## CONCLUSIONS

In 1925, the issue of women's suffrage in Chiapas in effect became entangled in a complex web of political alliances, opportunism, and compromises, which ultimately allowed not only for its issuance and ratification but also for its maintenance as law. This decree has been typically treated by historians of Chiapas and of women's politics in Mexico as an anomaly, or an interesting bit of trivia. However, the decree is of far greater significance than that, particularly in terms of the light that it sheds on the political alliances which made it possible at that moment and also in terms of the important historiographical gaps to which the fact of its existence points.

First, the promulgation of the Chiapas suffrage decree must be considered in a regional context. It is striking that three of the first four precedents of women's suffrage in Mexico were concentrated within the same region, within a period of only a few years (1922-5).

The historiography of Mexico's southeast has been overwhelmingly characterized by the oft'-repeated assertion that southeastern states are politically and culturally exceptional within Mexico or even within the region; this is particularly true in the cases of three of the first Mexican states that first allowed women to vote, Yucatán, Tabasco, and Chiapas. Yet women's suffrage represents a significant political commonality between these three states in the postrevolutionary period and demands further examination of other such southeastern regional patterns and relationships, which have been ironically elided within the regionalized revisionism of the historiography of the Mexican Revolution of recent decades.

Second, while the chief inspiration for Carlos Vidal to declare the women of Chiapas full citizens was almost certainly his alliance with the Chiapas Socialist movement, the suffrage decree is perhaps most historiographically provocative in terms of the implications it has for how we interpret Vidal's relationship to Plutarco Elías Calles, as Calles firmly supported Vidal's candidacy and women's suffrage was one of the very first *vidalista* initiatives (albeit via Córdoba). This is a political relationship that has yet to be studied comprehensively; indeed, we know very little about the nature of Calles' involvement and investment in Chiapas or in the region more generally, which his relationship with Carlos Vidal suggests may have been far more extensive and long-standing than previously assumed. While it is easy to see what Carlos Vidal believed that he stood to gain via an alliance with the increasingly powerful Calles, perhaps the more interesting question is what Calles believed that he stood to gain by supporting Vidal, and to the extent that he did, including his evident tacit support of women's suffrage in the state. Further, Calles'

responses (or lack thereof) to the Chiapas suffrage decree serves to significantly complicate previous interpretations of Calles' stance on the politicization of Mexican women, which has generally been understood to be overwhelmingly negative.

Third, it is clear that this decree was not insignificant or subsequently quickly forgotten, as one might be led to conclude from the few studies that mention it in passing. Further, it is important not to discount the meaningful significance of the Chiapas suffrage decree on the grounds that it was propelled in large part by the political opportunism of men who might otherwise have not thought twice about the extension of the franchise to women. The life and career of Florinda Lazos León stand as definitive testimony to the fact that there were women in Chiapas who not only fought for the right to vote and to run for office but who made use of that ability. While Lazos was one of only two women elected to the state legislature by the time the federal suffrage amendment was ratified at the end of 1952, numerous chiapaneca women worked in lower levels of government, as municipal leaders and local bureaucrats. Even this low-level political participation would not have been possible in Chiapas without granting women full citizenship. Moreover, if the 1925 decree of suffrage was not necessarily transformative within the state in its effect, it was presented as a relevant precedent within the subsequent public and congressional debates that took place over the eventual extension of the electoral franchise to women at the national level in Mexico, twenty-eight years later.

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**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Córdoba published an open letter to the people of the state on May 20, 1925, to recount his acts as governor in the days between his *Informe* and when he left office. His description of the suffrage decree is included in this addendum. *Informe que el C. Gobernador Provisional del Estado, Lic. César Córdoba, rinde ante el H. Congreso Local sobre su gestión Administrativa durante el período del 1 de enero del corriente año, a la fecha*. Tuxtla Gutiérrez: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1925, 17-20.

<sup>2</sup> *Periódico Oficial del Gobierno Constitucional del Estado de Chiapas (República Mexicana)*, Tomo XLII, núm. 20, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, 20 May 1925. Significantly, Chiapas is frequently described as the third state in Mexico to have given women the right to vote, a count which excludes Tabasco's limited enfranchisement of women a few months before.

<sup>3</sup> *Diario de los Debates de La H. Cámara de Diputados, 1916-1994*, Legislatura XL, Año Legislativo I, Período Ordinario, 20 December, 1946. Núm. Diario: 45. "Piden a la Cámara el Sufragio Femenino," *Excelsior*, September 5, 1943, p. 10. "Un Comité Femenino Pide Derecho de Voto," *Excelsior*, July 28, 1944, p. 10. "Contra Viento y Marea van a Votar las Sufragistas," *Excelsior*, October 14, 1944, p. 10. "El PRI Concede Voto a la Mujer en sus Próximos Plebiscitos Internos," *Excelsior*, April 19, 1946, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> These amendments were of constitutional articles 115 and 34, respectively. Lázaro Cárdenas also tried to politically enfranchise Mexican women during his presidency, between the years of 1937, when he sent a proposed suffrage amendment to the Chamber of Deputies, and 1940, when, despite a sufficient number of state ratifications, the matter was effectively dropped after the Chamber declined to take the final steps necessary to enact the amendment.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Benjamin describes Fernández Ruiz's movement: "The Mapache leaders were frontier finqueros and ranchers—owners, it was said, of 'fincas pobres.' Their soldiers were foremen, cowboys, ex-soldiers, rurales, and loyal servants and day workers. [...] They rebelled to defend their valleys against abusive outsiders [...] The Mapache leaders were finqueros who valued their autonomy more than any assistance they might gain from regional or national government. They saw themselves as revolutionaries who struggled under terrible conditions for Chiapas, for their way of life, and in defense of their fincas." (Benjamin 1996: 125).

<sup>6</sup> Archivo Fernando Torreblanca (AFT), fondo: 11, serie: 030500, expediente: 423, DIVISION LIBRE DE CHIAPAS, legajo: 1, foja: 16, inventario: 3298.

<sup>7</sup> "Informe del C. Gobernador Provisional Lic. César Córdoba, pt.1." *Periódico Oficial del Gobierno Constitucional del Estado de Chiapas (República Mexicana)* Tomo XLII, núm. 19, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, 13 May 1925.

<sup>8</sup> In his extremely cursory 1928 description of Córdoba's term as governor, Ernest Gruening writes: "Córdoba carefully fulfilled the legal requirements for new elections, which were held quietly, and the legislature then elected decided on May 11, 1925, that Carlos Vidal was the state executive." (Gruening 1928: 409).

<sup>9</sup> *Periódico Oficial del Gobierno Constitucional del Estado de Chiapas (República Mexicana)*, Tomo XLII, núm. 20, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, 20 May 1925. All translations to English are by the author.

<sup>10</sup> For discussions of Alvarado's promotion of the politicization of women in Yucatán, see (Holden 1991) and (McGee Deutsch 1991).

<sup>11</sup> *Diario de los Debates de la H. Cámara de Diputados 1916-1994* Legislatura XL Año Legislativo I Período Ordinario, 20 December, 1946. Núm. Diario: 44. "The education, social conditions, and peculiar characteristics of women are such that their participation in municipal elections represents a moralizing factor in the electoral process and in the administration of municipalities. If civil legislation seeks to eliminate the injustice of difference in privilege between people of different sexes, it does not follow that in a democratic political regime, such differences be perpetuated, now that, directly or indirectly, the woman in her home, as a collaborator to her spouse, or through her colleagues at her job, contributes to the formation of public opinion and is a source of guidance to all of government, and of cooperation in the relations of the rulers and the

ruled.” Mexican feminist Margarita Robles de Mendoza also argued in the 1930s that the municipality was a natural extension of the home, or in her words, like unto “un hogar grande,” and therefore a sphere in which women belonged. She wrote: “if we women have for centuries demonstrated ourselves to be capable of governing our own homes, it is only logical that we be conceded the right to vote in municipal matters.” (Robles de Mendoza 1931: 37).

<sup>12</sup> Various authors use different acronyms for the Chiapas Socialist Party. Thomas Benjamin uses “PSC” while Emilio Zebadúa and Daniela Spenser prefer “PSCh.” I have adopted the latter method of referring to the Party.

<sup>13</sup> Here I am echoing the argument made by Thomas Benjamin and by Emilio Zebadúa on this point. (Benjamin 1996: 152-153, Zebadúa 1999: 154). See also (García de León 2002: 380).

<sup>14</sup> Tiburcio Fernández Ruiz was similarly accused of harboring delahuertista sympathies by many of his political enemies and critics. Nevertheless, despite tremendous strife within the state, unlike neighboring states, Chiapas never fell to De La Huerta’s rebel forces.

<sup>15</sup> *El Tribuno*, September 1, 1918. Año 1, Núm. 18. p. 1. This same word-for-word endorsement appeared on the front page of numerous issues of the paper from 1918-1920.

<sup>16</sup> *Patria Libre*, Tomo 1, Núm. 6, March 29, 1925, p. 1

<sup>17</sup> See for instance García de León’s discussion of Vidal’s relationship to Calles, as compared to Fernández Ruiz’s relationship to Obregón. (García de León 2002: 381).

<sup>18</sup> Archivo Plutarco Elías Calles (APEC), expediente: 51, ENRIQUEZ, Raymundo E. (Ing.), legajo: 1/9. Foja: 4, inventario 1780.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Fondo Obregón-Calles (OC), 731-Ch-3.

<sup>21</sup> Chiapas was the only one of the southeastern states to formally declare women to be full citizens in this period. Tabasco’s suffrage decree of 1925 offered women more limited political rights, while Yucatán’s even earlier precedent of allowing women to vote in practice during the governorship of Felipe Carrillo Puerto (1922-4) was evidently never formalized into state law.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Gordillo y Ortiz adds that Lazos “unified numerous contingents of campesinas” under the slogan of “Land and Tools for Farming.”

<sup>23</sup> Florinda Lazos. “Por que se le concedieron derechos políticos a la mujer chiapaneca.” *El Palenque*, September 10, 1925, p. 2, 41.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Lazos’ reference to “masks” almost certainly is a purposeful allusion to the Mapaches’ namesake, the raccoon.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> *La Gleba*, Año 1, Núm. 8, July 30, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Periódico Oficial del Gobierno Constitucional del Estado de Chiapas*, Tomo XLIII, núm. 47, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, 24 November 1926. It is unclear whether or not Lazos León continued in this position, as the formatting of the *Periódico* changes after February of 1927, and the position of Prosecretaria is no longer listed on the title page. Lazos León is by this point going by her married name and the title “Professor.” I have no evidence as to when she earned her law degree which Shirlene Soto references.

<sup>28</sup> The author includes several primary source documents in this pamphlet, one of which is the text of this speech by Governor Sabines on December 22, 1952.

<sup>29</sup> *Balún Canán*, No. 1, February 1925

<sup>30</sup> “Hogar. Familia. Raza.” I have taken some liberty in translating “raza” here, as it is clear that the literal translation of “race” is not sufficient to connote what I perceive to be the intended meaning of “racial heritage.”

<sup>31</sup> *Balún Canán*, No. 4, 1 April 1925

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> *Balún Canán*, No. 6, 1 May 1925

<sup>34</sup> *Balún Canán*, No. 8, 1 June 1925

<sup>35</sup> Very few chiapaneco newspapers from May and June of 1925 have survived in Tuxtla archives, which serve to greatly magnify the significance within this study of what little periodical coverage of the suffrage decree does exist. I acknowledge that my emphasis of a small local paper like *Balún Canán* as a source may misrepresent its contemporary significance as a news source, but I have had little choice but to rely on the insights it provides.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> De Aguilar C., Ramiro. "A Vuelo Pluma: Voto". El Herald, 13 December 1952, p. 2

<sup>38</sup> De Aguilar C., Ramiro. "A Vuelo Pluma: Voto". El Herald, 28 December 1952, p. 2